This article provides activities and a story about the forest for kids.

Chipper the Energy Beaver loves to take care of the forest, and he loves to trim trees. Fortunately, both of those things can work together. This activity sheet is all about the ways we can take care of the forest, just like a gardener takes care of a vegetable garden—by removing the “weeds” and taking care of the good plants.

Did You Know?

- The word “Pennsylvania” means “Penn’s Woods,” named after the state’s founder (William Penn) and the wonderful forests that are still all over the state.
- Dry wood has almost the same amount of energy per pound, regardless of the species.
- Wood can even be turned into gasoline or airplane fuel.

Story Time: A Walk in the Woods

Chipper takes his favorite family for a walk in the forest.

It was a beautiful day for a hike, and Chipper was taking Jon and Sally and their parents for a walk to Hickory Ridge. “It’s one of my favorite spots,” said Chipper, “although some of the path to get there isn’t so nice.”

“Really?” said Jon and Sally together. “Why not?”

“Come along, and you’ll see,” said Chipper. And they all set off, curious about what they might find.

The trail soon entered the forest at the base of Hickory Ridge, and Chipper began shaking his head. “Sad, sad, sad. Now do you see what I mean?”

Sally and Jon looked around, but all they saw were trees everywhere. “It’s a Forest, Chipper,” said their dad. “What’s so sad about that?”

“Look closer,” said Chipper. “This forest is full of small trees all bunched together. None of them have enough space to grow straight and tall. The trees are starving for light, water, and nutrients.”

“Wow,” said their mom. “That is sad! Is there any hope?”

“Well, just come along,” said Chipper. “This hike does get better.”

They continued on the trail, and after a few minutes they reached an area where the forest had been partially cleared, with small stumps left everywhere and wood chips scattered on the ground.

“Oh no!” cried Sally. “Someone has killed the forest! Quick, call the police!”

“Not so fast, Sally,” said Chipper. “Nobody has killed the forest. Actually, they’ve saved it.”

“Huh?” everyone said.
"Foresters have done a special job here on this forest. They've trimmed out the diseased or damaged trees and thinned it out so that
the remaining trees will have room to grow. They took out all the weed trees and left the best ones for the forest--trees that will
provide food and habitat for wildlife and be good for timber later on, which we can use to build beautiful homes and furniture and
other good things."

"I never imagined that a forest could have weeds!" said their mom. "It makes sense though."

"How do the foresters pay for it?" asked their dad.

"Good question," said Chipper. "The wood that they harvest is sold for energy production. Many schools, hospitals, and other places
use heating systems that burn wood chips. Not only are the wood chips cheaper than heating oil or electricity, they are helping to
pay for improving the forest. The foresters are careful to leave behind the smaller branches and leaves, which are important for
adding nutrients to the soil as well as providing habitat for bugs and small animals."

"So, does that mean that the few trees that are here will grow into a big forest?"

"That's right," said Chipper. "In the coming years, we'll be able to see a beautiful forest growing up that could have never happened if
it weren't for smart people like us taking care of the forest."

As they continued climbing, they soon reached the top of Hickory Ridge, where beautiful, mature trees mixed with younger growing
trees to form a healthy forest. "Now this is what I call a nice forest," said Chipper.

"I see what you mean," said Sally. "The trees all have enough space to grow, and they are growing straight and healthy."

"Yes," said their dad, "and there are trees of different ages and varieties here--a nice mix that provides shelter and food for wildlife."

"Speaking of food," said Jon, "did we bring anything to eat? These trees might look tasty to you, Chipper, but I don't think I could eat
them!"

"I think you're always hungry," laughed Sally.

"Well, it just so happens that I did bring sandwiches for a nice picnic lunch," said their mom. "Chipper, do you know any good
places to sit and have a meal?"

"Come with me," said Chipper. "I know a perfect little spot just ahead with a lovely view of the forest."

**Activities**

**Tree Hunt**

How many trees can you see from where you are or from the nearest window? How many are big? How many are small? Are they all
the same kind of tree or are they different? You can tell by looking at the leaves and the bark.

**Cookout**

One of the best ways to use wood energy is to have a cookout. Ask your parents to plan a cookout using wood or charcoal and
including roasting marshmallows on the ends of sticks for dessert. Mmm!

**For Parents**

To learn more about wood energy and other interesting topics, visit the Penn State Extension website.

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